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<div align="center">The Tragic Story of Americans and their Cars</div>

Since their conception, cars have ingrained themselves into the everyday lives of Americans. Cars have become an extremely important part of our economy and our culture. They're also why our cities were designed the way they are now. There is a glaring reason why American cities are consistently beat by other cities across the globe in terms of livability. There is a reason why public transit in American cities are in such poor conditions. It's because we are hyper dependent on cars and that dependence is making our lives a lot more inefficient. Our infrastructure as a whole has been centered around the car, and that infrastructure is failing. And car owners aren't the only people going through transportation problems. Non-car owners face worse, since public transit is viewed as secondary to the car, and thus, doesn't get as much time or resources. Pedestrians are always at risk in a city where cars surround them on every level. If you take a step out onto a busy road in New York City, where car ownership is only at around 45% (lowest car ownership among major U.S. cities), you will find yourself completely surrounded by vehicles. But why did it get this way? Were cities always designed for the car? Well, not exactly. Cities were around long before cars, but now they accommodate cars more than they accommodate people. As for the why, that's a story of government corruption and corporate lobbying. American motor corporations lobbied the government heavily to build big highways and roads to accommodate more cars, and this practice heavily influenced city

planning. For starters, it made cars the primary mode of transportation in the country, neglecting other more efficient options like trains and buses. It wasn't long before neighborhoods were planned and built with the car fully in mind, and cities were bulldozed and vacant space was occupied by parking lots and highways. These issues have long been neglected, and what we have now is a growing transportation crisis, which affects more than you might realize.

But what does car centrism *really* affect? Why should you care? Car centrism has been at the forefront of transportation in the U.S., and the way our infrastructure has been designed has come at a cost for working class families. It is genuinely not the best way to move people. If we look at a city like Los Angeles, we instantly think of the big highways and roads, but we also think of the ridiculous traffic problem that city faces. The biggest reason for their traffic issue is the fact that they chose to build more and more roads for more and more cars. The result is a crippling amount of cars trying to get where they need to go, with no other alternative. This has been proven in "The Fundamental Law of Road Congestion: Evidence from US Cities," where research on multiple U.S. cities find that building more roads leads to more congestion. So, we know that building more roads isn't sustainable.

As for the existing roads, their layout was designed with many things in mind, but in particular, many city planners designed public transit and roadways to intentionally isolate lower-income communities. For decades, highways and low bridges were built around these neighborhoods, effectively severing them from schools, city services, jobs, and commercial districts. It might help to add that most people living in these neighborhoods were people of color. The intention was to isolate, knowing fully that many of the people living in these neighborhoods could not afford a car. In many instances, these neighborhoods were completely destroyed to make room for more roads. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation,

more than 475,000 homes were bulldozed and a million people were displaced in order to make room to build the infamous Interstate Highway System. Take the human cost of building these roadways into account.

Public transit in most cities is almost useless, too, as transit systems have been long neglected. In New York City, the city with the most efficient transit system in the country, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority deals with state budget cuts, as well as fees imposed by the state to pay for expenses that have nothing to do with the transit operations. The common view of the government toward public transit is that it is less of a priority and it reflects on the condition of mass transit in U.S. cities. Business Insider published a list of fifteen cities with the most efficient transit systems in the world, and only three major U.S. cities made the list. What we can learn from this information is that the government doesn't run public transportation smoothly, which leads to crippling financial issues, and that the design of these systems aren't that efficient. If the former problem was solved, the latter would be an easy fix. Public transportation is linked to economic growth, happier populaces, and a greener city, so it makes the most sense to start fixing transit agencies. According to *Economic Impact of Public Transportation Investment*, "a shift from auto to public transportation would facilitate increased productivity and competitiveness within cities". In short, worker productivity increases when commute times to their job are shorter, and job markets become saturated because of the connectivity that public transportation produces. Multiple studies by the National Center for Biotechnology Information concluded that free bus passes for both young people and senior citizens contributed to increased social engagement, better opportunities, and a reduction of depressive symptoms. These benefits are something that U.S. cities are in dire need of, especially after the pandemic, and the fact that it is so obtainable should be upsetting to most people.

The main obstacle for improving mass transit and reducing dependency on cars is you. Yes, you, the person that takes their car to work everyday, and refuses to advocate for mass transit. Public perception on mass transit is negative but will not do anything to improve said transit systems. Cars are one of the leading causes of carbon emissions in the world, and the auto industry's ties to the oil industry makes this duo the most polluting entity currently. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, an average car will produce 4.6 tons of carbon dioxide per year. The same agency stated that the U.S. oil industry produces 8 million metric tons of methane, which is released into the atmosphere. One of the main reasons why policies that limit car usage can't gain any traction is because we've had this idea that having your own car is a mark of success and wealth, while public transit is seen as a lesser option. The reality is that we're alone in this idea and we should let it go. Our car culture isn't sustainable on any metric whatsoever. If you look at the bigger picture, you see places like Barcelona banning heavy traffic from a large chunk of city space and replacing it with walkable streets, bike paths, and public transportation connections. The result is an improved economy and happier people who spend more time outside, are more active, and purchase more from local shops. We don't even have to look internationally. We've seen downtown districts in some U.S. cities ban cars, and the same effects were produced. Cars have their place in our world, no doubt about it. But, please, we shouldn't allow them to take over our spaces, pollute our environment, and worsen our living spaces everyday.

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